

THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

MERYL MEISLER'S SASSY CIRCUS AND CREEPY CLOWNS

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American photographer Meryl Meisler never dreamed about running away and joining the circus but she always loved the concept. It was the Meisler family tradition to see The Greatest Show on Earth when The Ringling Bros, Barnum & Bailey Circus came to New York. The lights, costumes, performers — there was nothing as big as the circus.

In 1977, Meryl Meisler met filmmakers at the famous Studio 54 who asked her to photograph The Greatest Show on Earth for a story they were pitching. She photographed performers while they were getting ready, practicing, hanging out, and caring for their animals and kin. Meryl Meisler learned that many came from a long line of multi-generational circus families. Those photographs were published for the first time in her book entitled Purgatory & Paradise SASSY '70s Suburbia & The City.

STEVEN
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In 2017, The Ringling Bros, Barnum & Bailey Circus announced their final season. The child in Meryl Meisler screamed to go back to the circus. The artist within knew she had to photograph it. In May 2017 at Nassau Coliseum, NY, she was star struck photographing the performers up close, sensing a caring community passionate about their life's work. It was The Greatest Show on Earth's farewell performance of Out Of This World. Her inner child was delighted, the artist in awe. The day was bitter sweet.

In Meryl Meisler's opinion "Every day seems like a chaotic circus of deceitful distraction, hateful divisive 'un-American' actions, with creepy clowns running our nation amok." When photographing clowns again, she reinterpreted some of her 1977 photos to illustrate those feelings. These pictures are now on view at the Black Box Gallery, in Brooklyn, until November 22, 2017. "These clowns literally give me the creeps," she says. "The Greatest Show on Earth has ended. An administration claiming to Make America Great Again is turning our society backward to darkest times."